

Iowa Outdoors
Iowa Department of Natural Resources
www.iowadnr.com

Editor: Mick Klemesrud, 515/281-8653
mick.klemesrud@dnr.state.ia.us

May 4, 2004

1. Iowa Hunting, Fishing Licenses Now Available on the Internet
2. Iowans Preparing for Free Camping Weekend
3. Crappies and Mushrooms – by Joe Wilkinson
4. Iowa Fishing Report

IOWA HUNTING, FISHING LICENSES NOW AVAILABLE ON THE INTERNET

DES MOINES – The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) began selling hunting and fishing licenses on its website on April 19, and so far, sales have been steady.

“The process is real simple and only takes a few minutes to complete,” said Rich Smith, with the DNR’s license bureau. “You can now buy your license at 11 p.m. or 2 a.m. from the convenience of your own home.”

Any licenses that is available from a point-of-sale vendor is now available at www.iowadnr.com. Click on the hunter orange “Buy Your Hunting and Fishing License Here” icon. If the license has a tag, the tag will be mailed within five to seven working days. Internet sales of licenses with tags is closed 10 days before the season begins.

People who purchase a license online will be charged a convenience fee of \$2 plus 2.5 percent of the total sale. The Iowa DNR accepts MasterCard, Visa or e-check only for Internet sales. Once a license is purchased, the DNR will send the license as an electronic file. Computers will need Adobe Acrobat Reader®, which is available free on the DNR website, to view and print the license.

For more information, contact Smith at 515-281-0162.

###

IOWANS PREPARING FOR FREE CAMPING WEEKEND

DES MOINES – Campers across the state are getting ready for free camping weekend at Iowa state parks, recreation areas and forests, May 14 to 16.

Free camping weekend offers Iowa residents the opportunity to camp and participate in interpretive programs offered at DNR managed land at no cost. Camping in Iowa state parks is on a first-come, first-serve basis and reservations are not accepted. Campers will need to register as usual with the exception of paying for the campsite. All campsites and additional hook-ups are included free of charge. If Iowans show up on Thursday before the free weekend to register, they will need to pay for Thursday night. Nonresidents will need to pay the appropriate campsite fee during the weekend.

If the weather forecast is good, many of the popular park campgrounds will fill quickly.

"Free camping weekend will be handled just like any other busy holiday weekend in state parks," said Sherry Arntzen, with DNR state parks bureau. Arntzen suggested that campers either call the park before heading out to make sure there are sites available or consider trying a new park.

"Some of our best kept secrets are the out-of-the-way parks. Free camping weekend offers a great reason to visit a new park," she said.

There is a number of interpretive programs offered in participating state parks throughout the weekend. Programs include wildflower walks, Dutch oven cooking, a fishing clinic, and Lewis and Clark presentations. Campers and local area residents interested in attending the interpretive programs, should either call the park office directly or visit the state parks website for information on the program content, times and locations.

All DNR managed state parks, recreation areas and forest campgrounds with the exception of Lake Ahquabi, Nine Eagles, Pine Lake, and Springbrook are participating. Campground electric projects are in progress at Lake Ahquabi and Pine Lake. Nine Eagles, Pine Lake, and Springbrook have paving work and road construction in the park. For a complete list of state parks, recreation areas and forests and other information about free camping weekend, visit the state park website at www.exploreiowaparks.com.

For more information contact Sherry Arntzen at 515-242-6233.

###

CRAPPIES AND MUSHROOMS

By Joe Wilkinson

Iowa Department of Natural Resources

It's a tough time of year to be a crappie fishing morel hunter. Or a morel hunting crappie angler. So many spots. So little time.

For a couple weeks each spring, both pursuits can be red hot. The weather - particularly the temperature - dictates the length and quality of the crappie bite or the morel season. More often than not, though, they hit at the same time. That same warm air that heats up the soil also raises water temperatures. That triggers crappies to spawn and morels to fruit from the nearly microscopic mycelium network just under the soil.

The Morel Issue

"I was out Monday in Polk County and found the little grays and a couple yellows. In central and southern Iowa, we are in the early stages of the morel season," reports Dr. Lois Tiffany, botany professor at Iowa State University. Tiffany is considered 'the mushroom expert' in Iowa and the Midwest and fields lots of inquiries in late April and May. In southern Iowa, the morels are popping. "One of our campers found a half pound of the bigger yellow morels on Monday," reports Mike Godby, park manager at Honey Creek State Park, near Moravia. "I've been seeing more vehicles parked along the road, too."

My own maiden voyage into the woods this week yielded none of the fungal treasures. I thought it might be early yet, but the neighbors had found some on three different days for the last week within a few miles of the shady Solon hillside I hunt two or three times each year. My more productive forays, though, have been in northeast Iowa on the way out from turkey hunting. Turkey hunting. Another good excuse to stay outside. It's a wonder I get any work done this time of year.

For these early days, Tiffany suggests going where the sun is. "South facing slopes, the lower part of them; especially if they're not heavily timbered (shaded) are the best places to look early," she offers. "It takes several days of soil temperatures in the 50s (for morels to develop). Once that daytime air temperature gets into the 70s, morel hunting is not too far off."

Most morel hunters—and experts—agree on elm trees as a great starting point. An extensive study published a decade or so ago noted that morels were found in the proximity of elms at least half the time. And dead elms are even better. After the devastation of Iowa's stately elm trees through the 50s, 60s and 70s, they are hard to find. But they are there. "A lot of bottomland and fencerows have elms," points out Tiffany. "As they age and become canopy trees, the beetles carrying the elm wilt fungus find them and infect them. We find that elm trees dead two or three years are best for finding morels."

Scientists argue that the microscopic network of fibers that ‘grows’ morels senses that it’s host (the elm) is dying and produce the fruit (morels) as a survival reaction. Most hunters don’t argue. They just pick them.

There *is* conflict, though, over the difference in morels. Over the years, three different names have been connected to the springtime mushroom. *Morchella deliciosa* refers to the small gray/white ones. The bigger yellow/tan ones are tagged *Morchella esculenta*. Find one of the giants; and scientists say you’re holding *Morchella crassipes*. “Enzyme analysis and other research shows a relationship between the three,” underscores Tiffany. “Is it one species with different varieties? Is it three species? To a mushroom hunter, it doesn’t matter. All are equally edible.”

Spoken like a true morel hunter.

The Crappie Bite

The same warm weather that makes morels pop causes crappies to spawn. And that means anglers are in for several sensational days of crappie catching. A week ago, anglers were still finding them in deep water; as the fish ‘staged’ before moving into the shallows to lay and fertilize eggs.

“With water temperatures in the mid 50s, upper 50s, they start spawning,” observes Paul Sleeper, fisheries management biologist for the Department of Natural Resources. Even then, Sleeper emphasizes that temperature is the key. “On a warm, windy day, it might be two to three degrees warmer in the shallows that the wind is *blowing into*. That can make a big difference in crappie fishing.”

A small jig and a minnow or either one alone works well for pre-spawn and spawning crappies. Sleeper reminds anglers that the cooler pre-spawn water still has fish moving a little slowly, so presentation should slow down. Spring crappies are an equal opportunity fish, too. You don’t need a boat or expensive fish-finding gear to lock in on a spot. “Almost everybody can do it,” says Sleeper. “They’re going to come into the shallows, usually around brush or rocky shorelines to spawn. You can walk up and down the shoreline and catch a lot of fish in a short time.”

And a skillet of crappie filets goes great with breaded, fried mushrooms...despite what your heart doctor says.

###

IOWA FISHING REPORT

For the week of May 4, 2004

www.iowadnr.com

For current information on fishing conditions for your lake or area, contact the office in that district. Phone numbers are listed with each district report.

Northeast

Mississippi River Pools 9 to 15: Water levels on the Mississippi River are expected to fall slightly throughout the week. Water clarity is very good and the temperature is staying near 58 degrees. Several species of fish have been biting, but fishing pressure is still somewhat light. Now is a good time to be on the river. Nice-sized white bass are being caught in the tailwaters of both **Lock and Dams 9** (Harpers Ferry) and **10** (Guttenberg). Most of these fish are being taken on small spinners and jigs. Bluegills and yellow perch have been biting in the tailwater and backwater areas of both pools. Try using a small jig tipped with a chunk of worm. Yellow perch numbers have been a pleasant surprise this year in **Pools 9-11**. It seems two strong year classes are present and should provide some good fishing for years to come. On the Wisconsin side of the Mississippi, some good backwater areas to fish include Black Hawk Bottoms (**Pool 9**), Bagley's or Jay's Lake (**Pool 10**), and the Bertom Lake complex (**Pool 11**). On the Iowa side, try Minnesota Slough near New Albin (**Pool 9**), Harpers Slough and Mudhen Lake near Harpers Ferry (**Pool 10**), and Swift Slough and Big Pond near Guttenberg (**Pool 11**). Along the bigger side channels and the main channel border areas, catfish, walleye and freshwater drum are all being taken in decent numbers in **Pools 9-11**. Freshwater drum may be the easiest fish to catch in the Mississippi River and are very tasty to eat, especially at this time of year. A simple worm rig with a sliding sinker is all you need for this feisty fish. Good areas for drum fishing include boat landings, such as the Army Road landing east of New Albin in **Pool 9**, off the new parking lot in Harpers Ferry leading into Harpers Slough (**Pool 10**), the Turkey River landing near the mouth of the Turkey River east of Millville or off of the county boat landing at Mud Lake just north of Dubuque (both in **Pool 11**). The Mississippi River is teeming with drum and you might as well take advantage of this species. There are no bag limits on freshwater drum. River stage at Bellevue is 8.2 feet. Crappie fishing is fair to good using jigs and/or minnows fished around woody structure and rocks in the backwater areas of **Pools 12-15**. Bluegill fishing is fair to good in the same locations using worms or wax worms. Largemouth bass in the backwater areas in **Pools 12-15** are hitting spinner baits and a jig-n-pig fished around woody structure. Freshwater drum fishing is excellent using night crawlers in **Pools 12-15**. A few channel catfish are being caught on night crawlers or cheese baits. *Note:* Remember the bag limit on bluegill, crappie, rock bass and white/yellow bass combined have been changed to 25 each on the Mississippi River. These panfish bag limits are a new regulation affecting the Mississippi River and all connected backwaters. Inland rivers do *not* have a bag limit on panfish. Check the *Iowa Fishing Seasons and Bag Limits for 2004* for more information.

Turkey River (Fayette and Clayton): Smallmouth bass fishing is good on night crawlers and jigs. Walleye are hitting live baits.

Cedar River (Mitchell and Floyd): Smallmouth bass and channel catfish are being caught on night crawlers.

Cedar River (Bremer and Black Hawk): Fishing is fair for channel catfish using dead baits. An occasional northern pike and walleye are also being caught on jigs tipped with a minnow.

Wapsipinicon River (Buchanan): Walleye fishing is good on jigs tipped with a minnow or night crawler. Fishing is fair for channel catfish using dead baits. A few northern pike are being picked up.

Maquoketa River (Delaware): Walleye and smallmouth bass fishing is fair using jigs tipped with a minnow or night crawler. White and yellow bass fishing is good on minnows below the City of Manchester and above Lake Delhi.

Lake Delhi (Delaware): Crappie fishing is good on jigs tipped with a small minnow or minnows fished under a slip bobber around docks or in rocky shorelines. Channel catfish are good on cut bait or minnows.

Volga Lake (Fayette): Crappie and bluegill fishing is good on tube jigs fished along the rocks. Largemouth bass are biting on night crawlers.

Big Woods, Brinker (East Lake) and South Prairie (Black Hawk): Crappie fishing is fair along the shoreline on sunny, bright days using minnows under a slip bobber.

Casey Lake (Tama) in Hickory Hills Park is good for bluegills using hooks or small jigs tipped with a piece of night crawler.

Trout fishing is excellent. **Clear Creek** is located in Allamakee County on the west side of Lansing. Clear Creek is stocked on an unannounced basis twice per month with rainbow and brook trout and has a naturally reproducing population of brown trout. One of the main stretches to fish is located in the county park on the west edge of Lansing. This area has some excellent habitat with deep holes as well as a universally accessible fishing pier. Other areas along the stream open to public fishing include the segment which flows through the town of Lansing, the stretch of stream along the marsh behind *Lansing Homes*, the stretch behind the Red Barn Restaurant and the pasture above the Red Barn. Note: If you fish behind the Red Barn and are not camping there, be sure to stop in and let them know that you are driving down to fish. Lansing is a beautiful town located on the Mississippi River and offers anglers quaint shops, scenic parks and enjoyable restaurants. **Bear Creek** in Fayette County offers great fishing opportunities for the adventurous angler. This stream is located three miles southwest of Wadena off County Road C24 and requires the angler to hike down into a beautiful, remote valley. Bear Creek is not stocked during the heat of the summer, so plan a trip to this beautiful stream in the near future. For current trout stocking information on these and other northeast Iowa trout streams, call the trout stocking hotline at 563-927-5736. You can also access the trout stocking calendar through the internet at www.iowadnr.com and go to the fish and fishing web pages.

For information on fishing in northeast Iowa, call the regional office in Manchester at 563-927-3276.

Northwest

Muskie season is closed until May 20 on Spirit Lake, East Okoboji and West Okoboji lakes in Dickinson County.

Spirit Lake (Dickinson): Walleye Weekend was a success with most anglers coming in to the docks with fish to take home. Anglers are having luck drifting with live bait (minnows, leeches, night crawlers) and trolling crankbaits. Northern pike fishing is good. Nice sized fish are being caught trolling and casting. Fishing the rushes in Angler's Bay has been great for bluegill and crappie. Use wax worms and small jigs for

the bluegills, and jigs tipped with minnows for crappies. Anglers are catching a few crappies at the North Grade. Templar Lagoon was hot for crappies earlier last week, but the action slowed during the weekend. Some large bullheads are being caught at the North Grade on worms.

Black Hawk Lake (Sac): Crappie fishing is good in Town Bay and the marina using mini jigs and a bobber. Yellow bass fishing is fair to good along the east shore or wherever the wind is blowing in. Fishing is excellent for 8-inch bullheads at the inlet area.

Storm Lake (Buena Vista): Walleye fishing is good using twisters along the south shoreline. Channel catfish are good on shad entrails.

Brushy Creek (Webster): Bass have moved into the shallow water around the edge of the lake. Use any type of plastic lure, minnow or bass bait. Anglers are catching walleyes during the evening by the fishing jetties using large minnows and slip bobbers. A few crappies and bluegills have been caught on live bait.

Clear Lake (Cerro Gordo): Yellow Bass are being caught along the north shore using small jigs and minnows. Walleye fishing is fair using jigs and minnows. Fish the east shore, Billy's Reef, Dodge's Point or the Island. Bullhead fishing is fair. Use night crawlers on the bottom at sunset and into the early evening.

Beeds Lake (Franklin): Crappies are biting along the causeway, north shore jetties and drift fishing by boat. Use small jigs and minnows. The crappies are mostly 7 to 9 inches.

Rice Lake (Worth/Winnebago): Bullhead fishing is good using night crawlers on windy shorelines.

Silver Lake (Worth): Bullhead fishing is good off the fishing jetty by the boat ramp. Use night crawlers on the bottom for the best action.

For more information on fishing in northwest Iowa, call the regional office in Spirit Lake at 712-336-1840.

Southwest

Three Mile (Union): Channel catfish are being caught at the upper end and in shallow bays with the dip baits and liver. Walleye fishing is good over rocky areas and trolling crankbaits around the big points. Crappie and bluegill are biting better and are moving into the shallow rocky areas in the early morning and late evening. Largemouth bass fishing is good all over the lake. Some muskie can be caught using crankbaits and spinners off the points and deeper shoreline during the mid-day, or in the shallow bays early or late.

Twelve Mile (Union): Channel catfish fishing is good in the upper ends using liver or night crawlers. Some walleye are being caught around the big points.

Icaria (Adams): Fishing is good for catfish at east end using night crawlers and liver. Some walleye are being caught trolling the dam.

Binder (Adams): Largemouth bass fishing is good along the dam.

Grade Lake (Clarke): Bluegills are biting well on night crawlers in the corners of the dam and around the deeper points.

West Lake Osceola (Clarke): Bluegill, crappie and largemouth bass fishing is good in the timbered coves.

Green Valley (Union): Crappies are starting to move over the rocks early and late in the day. Some really big bluegill can be caught in the shallows with night crawlers.

Little River (Decatur): Crappies are starting to move into the shallow rocky areas in the early morning and late afternoon. Walleye are being caught while trolling the dam and large points in the lower portion of the lake. Catfish can be caught in the bays using liver or night crawlers.

Slip Bluff (Decatur): Bluegill and crappie are being caught around the tree piles during mid-day, and off the rocks of the dam early and late in the day. Largemouth bass can be caught off the west shoreline structure.

Fogle Lake (Ringgold): Crappies can be caught early in the morning and late evening in the rocks off the dam and jetties.

Wilson Lake (Taylor): Crappies can be caught off the rocks of the dam early and late in the day.

Windmill Lake (Taylor): Bluegills can be caught with night crawlers in the shallows.

Walnut Creek Marsh (Ringgold): Bluegill and crappie can be caught along the south shore and around the jetties.

Big Creek (Polk): Crappie fishing has been fair using jigs with or without minnows. Walleye fishing has been good using live bait and spinner rigs with minnows and night crawlers, although most of the walleye are below the 15-inch minimum length limit.

Lake Ahquabi (Warren): Bluegill fishing has been good using jigs with worms. Some anglers are doing well using twister tails. Largemouth bass fishing has been good, with some fish caught with top-water lures. Crappie fishing has been slow. The best fishing is early morning and late afternoon.

Don Williams (Boone): Channel catfish fishing is good using night crawlers and cut baits toward the north end of the lake. Largemouth bass fishing is good using plugs. Crappie fishing is fair using minnows and jigs, with the best areas along the east side of the lake.

Rock Creek Lake (Jasper): Crappie fishing is good using night crawlers or minnows and jigs. Channel catfish fishing is fair using night crawlers.

Red Rock (Marion): Crappie and white bass have been hitting on jigs and minnows in the bays and coves, or elsewhere where the water is warming. Channel catfish have also been reported hitting in the bay and cove areas using night crawlers and worms.

Red Rock tailwater (Marion): Crappie and white bass fishing has been good in the tailwater using jigs and minnows. Some walleye have been taken.

Roberts Creek (Marion): Crappie fishing has been fair to good using jigs with minnows and/or night crawlers. Channel catfish have been hitting on night crawlers.

Easter Lake (Polk): Crappie fishing has been good on jigs and minnows. A few walleye has also been reported.

Des Moines River (Polk): White bass and some walleye have been caught using jigs below Scott Street Dam in Des Moines.

Saylorville Tailwater (Polk): Walleye and white bass fishing has been good using white and chartreuse glitter twister tails, and sonar. Channel catfish fishing has been good using cut baits (shad).

Viking (Montgomery): Crappie fishing is fair using tube jigs around structure. Catfish fishing is fair. Largemouth bass fishing has picked up in the evening around structure.

Cold Springs (Cass): Fishing is good for 7 to 8-inch crappies using jigs and minnows around structure near shore.

Manawa (Pottawattamie): Fishing is good for channel catfish. A few crappies are being caught in the lagoon.

Orient (Adair): Fishing is excellent for 7-inch crappies using jigs and/or minnows along the dam, and the southeast shore near the water pump house.

Mormon Trail (Adair): Walleye fishing is fair. Anglers are catching a few crappies.

Prairie Rose (Shelby): Fishing is good for 7-inch crappies using jigs and minnows around rocks and woody structure.

DeSoto Bend (Harrison): Walleye and crappie fishing is excellent. Walleyes being harvested are 15 to 16 inches. Crappies being caught are 8 to 12 inches. Anglers also are catching good numbers of largemouth bass. Carp are being caught near shore.

Southwest Iowa Farm Ponds: A lot of bluegill can be caught using night crawlers. Fishing is fast and furious. Crappies and bass are also being caught in shallow bays that warm quickly.

For more information on fishing in southwest Iowa, call the regional office in Lewis at 712-769-2587.

Southeast

Mississippi River Pools 16 to 19: Fishing has been slow to fair. The water temperature is 58 degrees at Muscatine. On Pool 16 the pool stage is 11.3 and the tail stage is 6.54 and is expected to drop slightly over the next week. Crappie and bluegill fishing has been fair. Anglers are catching a few largemouth bass. Channel catfishing has been fair on shad, minnows and night crawlers. White bass fishing has been fair in the tailwaters and the mouths of the creeks.

Lake Odessa (Louisa): Bluegill and crappie fishing is fair using minnow or worms under a bobber. Fish the shallow areas of the complex.

Lake Darling (Washington): Crappies have not moved back in yet, but the warmer weather this week may start the spawn. Anglers are catching some nice bluegills using worms and bobbers in shallow water around the riprap. There will be road construction going on in the park. The campground road will be closed during the workweek but should be open by 6 p.m. or later on Friday. The main boat ramp will still be open.

Lake Geode (Henry): Anglers are catching a few bluegills and bass. Concentrate in the shallow bays adjacent to the deeper drop-offs. The fish will be moving into the shallows to feed during the afternoon on warm days.

Lake Belva Deer (Keokuk): The lake is still about three and a half feet low, but water is still running in from the marsh. Bluegill fishing is fair to good. The bluegills are biting very softly. If the bluegill feels any resistance, they drop the bait. Use a very light jig tipped with a piece of worm and work it very slowly around the flooded trees. Anglers are also catching a few of the 10 to 12-inch bass. Try fishing plastic worms around the flooded timber for the bass.

Lake Rathbun (Appanoose): Crappies have been hitting on tube jigs in the coves. The best fishing has been in the afternoon on sunny days. Crappies have also been hitting on jigs in 10 to 15 feet of water.

Lake Sugema (Van Buren): Largemouth bass have been hitting artificial lures. Bluegills have been biting on small jigs tipped with a chunk of night crawler. Crappies have been hitting minnows.

Lake Keomah (Mahaska): Bluegills are being caught from shore on night crawlers.

Lake Macbride (Johnson): Crappie fishing is picking up throughout the lake on jigs and minnows. Anglers continue to catch largemouth bass.

Iowa River (Johnson): Anglers continue to catch white bass and an occasional walleye below Coralville and Burlington St. dams on jigs and minnows.

Wapsipinicon River (Jones and Linn): Fishing continues to be good for smallmouth bass and an occasional walleye on jigs and minnows. White bass fishing has been fair.

Skunk River (Washington and Henry): Carp fishing is excellent below the dam at Oakland Mills. Catfishing is hit and miss until the weather warms.

English River (Washington): Catfishing is fair to good on night crawlers and minnows.

Southeast Iowa Farm Ponds: Fishing has been fair to good on farm ponds for bluegill, crappie, and bass on live and artificial baits.

For more information on fishing in southeast Iowa, call the regional office in Brighton at 319-694-2430.

###